



Strengthening food safety

The Minneapolis Health Department has been involved in two efforts to strengthen food safety. First, the City is anticipating revisions to its food code as the Minnesota Departments of Health and Agriculture are in the process of aligning the Minnesota Food Code with the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) most recent code from 2013; currently, the State's food code is based on the FDA's 1995 code. Every few years, the FDA publishes updates to its Food Code, which provides a food safety model for government jurisdictions to regulate local retail and food service industries such as restaurants, hospitality and grocery industries.

Updates to the food code address health and safety issues around the growing demand for more convenience foods, home food delivery, dining out, and year-round access to fruits and vegetables from international sources. The new food code also addresses emerging pathogens associated with foodborne illness that constantly evolve with food industry changes. The updates to the Minnesota Food Code will address these issues for all Minnesota food establishments to ensure compliance to design, installation, construction, operation and maintenance requirements. The proposed language and public comment form are located on the State's website: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/food/code/2009revision/>. For more information, contact Cindy Weckwerth at 612-673-3485 cindy.weckwerth@minneapolismn.gov.

Second, the Health Department launched its first Certified Food Manager Class in Somali to make it easier for restaurant owners/operators to meet the Minnesota Food Code requirement that all restaurants have a certified food manager. The class was developed in response to concerns expressed by the Somali business community that it was nearly impossible for many Somali restaurants to meet this requirement due to language barriers.

As a solution, the department contracted with GlobeGlow Consulting to conduct food safety trainings for food service workers in Somali. Each training session consists of eight hours of hands-on activities and training, and two hours of testing. The training focuses on risk factors that result in food borne illnesses such as purchasing food from a safe source, controlling food temperatures and holding times, correct cooling procedures, correct cooking temperatures, good personal hygiene, and preventing food contamination from unclean equipment. To register for a class in Somali, contact Farhiya Farah at 612-702-5051.

Ordinance change protects youth from flavored and cheap tobacco products

On July 10, 2015, the City of Minneapolis approved an ordinance change to better protect youth health by restricting where flavored tobacco products can be sold and making cigar products more expensive. To inform this change, Minneapolis Health Department staff provided the City Council an overview of emerging trends in youth tobacco use, recent national and state data, and a qualitative assessment of the current status of youth tobacco access in the city, including reports from youth and community leaders.

The ordinance goes into effect January 1, 2016, and will restrict the sale of flavored tobacco products to tobacco shops and set a minimum age of 18 to enter these shops. As a result, the availability of flavored products will drop from 420 to 25 stores. With youth being more price sensitive than adults, the change also sets a higher price for individual cigar products with a minimum price of \$2.60 per stick, which currently sell for as little as three for 99 cents. Restrictions apply to all flavors (fruit, candy, etc.) except menthol, and tobacco products such as cigars, chew, electronic cigarette "e-juice" liquid and shisha used in tobacco pipes. Gas stations, convenience stores, bars, liquor stores and other venues will still be allowed to sell all menthol-flavored tobacco products.

With the same flavoring as candies such as Jolly Ranchers and Kool Aid, flavored tobacco can make it easier for youth to become addicted.

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Tobacco is still the leading cause of preventable death and most smokers start before 18 years of age. Flavored tobacco has the same addictive qualities and health effects as regular tobacco. The nicotine, which is also found in electronic cigarettes, may cause lasting harm to brain development and promote addiction.

In partnership with community organizations, the Health Department's tobacco prevention efforts have focused on raising awareness of the use of cheap, flavored tobacco in appealing to youth. In fall 2013, the department supported the Minneapolis Youth Congress' (MYC) exploration of tobacco issues and the development of public health recommendations. MYC's recommendations to the City Council in July 2014 sparked initial interest in creating policy change. A community driven effort led by NorthPoint's Breathe Free North and the Association of Non-smokers Minnesota, contributed to this successful policy change. For more information, contact D'Ana Tijerina at 612-673-3928 or DAAna.Tijerina@minneapolismn.gov.



Advocates for reducing access to tobacco products gathered on City Hall steps to celebrate the final City Council Vote.

Gretchen Musicant, Health Commissioner

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URBAN HEALTH AGENDA: State air pollution report reinforces Minneapolis pollution-reduction efforts

On July 13, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) released the report *Life and Breath: How Air Pollution in the Twin Cities Affects Public Health*. The report analyzes the most recent available MPCA air quality and MDH population health data to connect how air pollution affects health outcomes in the seven-county metro area. The study analyzed the two air pollutants with the most potential for direct harm to human health: fine particulate matter and ground-level ozone.

The study found that in 2008, metro area air pollution contributed to about 2,000 deaths, 400 hospitalizations and 600 emergency room visits. Groups most affected by air pollution were populations with higher rates of heart and lung disease, including people of color, the elderly, children with uncontrolled asthma, and people in poverty. Throughout the metro area, the highest concentrations of fine particulate matter were found in the urban core of the Minneapolis and St. Paul area. Many of the highest attributable asthma hospitalizations for children were found in Minneapolis and highest ozone-attributable asthma hospitalization rates were in North Minneapolis.

As a member of the Clean Air Minnesota partnership, the Minneapolis Health Department has been leading local efforts to reduce ground-level ozone by implementing initiatives to control pollutants affecting ozone formation with a focus on volatile organic compounds (VOCs). The Department's study, *Air Quality in Minneapolis: A Neighborhood Approach* focuses on determining hot spots of VOC emissions at a finer scale that are not the focus of MPCA ambient air monitoring sites. Through the Department's Green Business Matching Grant Program and in partnership with the local Environmental Initiative and Minnesota Technical Assistance Program, this information is being used for VOC-reduction efforts.

After identifying pollution sources, Health Department staff work in partnership with both large and small businesses to reduce or eliminate pollutants. Small businesses such as auto shops and dry cleaners may individually emit less than 10 tons per year, but collectively emit many tons of pollution. In addition, these smaller sources can also have localized health concerns for residents living near these facilities. By the end of this year, the Green Business Matching Grant Program will have reduced over 25,000 pounds of emissions annually in Minneapolis.

The City of Minneapolis' other efforts to improve air quality include having one of the cleanest public fleets in the nation, providing regional leadership for multimodal transportation options, and programs to improve the urban forest. Energy efficiency and renewable energy efforts through the City's Clean Energy Partnership and Climate Action Plan also benefit air quality. For more information, contact Jennifer Lansing at 612-673-3023 or jenni.lansing@minneapolismn.gov.

HEALTHY CITY UPDATES:

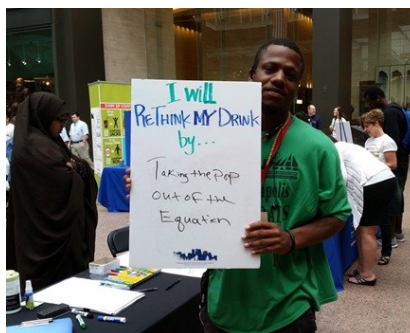
Rethinking sugary drinks

On July 1, the Minneapolis Health Department kicked off the *ReThink Your Drink, Every Sip Counts!* campaign with speakers and interactive activities at the IDS Center Crystal Court. The campaign is a partnership between the Health Department and community partners to:

- **Educate** the public about the health impacts of sugary drinks.
- **Create** healthier beverage environments by improving the availability of healthier options.
- **Encourage** people and places to choose healthier beverages over sugary drinks.

A reduction in sugary drink consumption can lead to significant health benefits such as weight loss, a decline in chronic diseases such as diabetes, and stronger teeth and bones. At the event, more than 75 people signed up to join the campaign, demonstrating a commitment to rethink their drink and choose nutritious beverages. Today, nearly 300 (and counting) people and places have signed up to participate in the campaign. To join the campaign or get campaign facts and information, visit www.rethinkyourdrink.minneapolismn.gov. Keep in touch on Facebook by liking the ReThink Your Drink Minneapolis page. Pictures speak louder than words - show us how you will be rethinking your drink this summer by

participating in the “Share a Better Beverage with...” challenge. The campaign is supported by the Minneapolis Health Department through funding from the Minnesota Department of Health’s Statewide Health Improvement Program. For more information, contact Vish Vasani at 612-673-3861 or vish.vasani@minneapolismn.gov.



At the July 1 campaign kickoff at the IDS Center Crystal Court, participants pledged how they would commit to rethinking their drink.



Public Health Specialist Nora Gordon talked to youth about the amount of sugar in popular drinks at the July 12 Northeast Minneapolis Open Streets event.

Minneapolis joins Big City Health Coalition

This spring, Minneapolis was invited to join the Big Cities Health Coalition (BCHC), a group of 26 health departments serving large urban centers that jointly address common health and safety issues like violence prevention, tobacco use and workforce training needs. At a July meeting, BCHC members had an opportunity to speak with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) representatives about challenges and accomplishments at the local level. Common themes voiced were the need for local, population-level data, which is often only available at the county level, along with reliable funding that is flexible. BCHC is updating information in its Big Cities Health Inventory, a unique compilation of national urban data last compiled in 2007. Soon to be released, the data offers an opportunity to compare Minneapolis with other big cities. The inventory will also highlight best practices to address health concerns such as Minneapolis’ youth violence prevention work. The CDC, de Beaumont Foundation and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation support BCHC.

Prenatal alcohol use study gets top ratings

An article written by the Health Department’s Research and Evaluation Division staff was recently rated the top-cited article in its field since 2012 by BioMedLib², which compiles research from a variety of scientific fields. The article, published in the *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, described the validation of alcohol use screening questions for pregnant women at their first prenatal care visit. These questions were part of the Prenatal Risk Overview (PRO) developed by the Health Department. The PRO also addresses drug use, smoking, mental health disorders, lack of basic needs and social support, and abuse victimization. The research study was funded by the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration. A second article from the study comparing results of PRO screening interviews conducted by nurses and community health workers was published in the *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved* and was also rated in BioMedLib’s top 20 at number 11. NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center in Minneapolis served as a site for both studies, while Community-University Health Care Center and Saint Paul’s West Side Community Health Services and East Side Family Clinic were in the second study.

Staff Updates:

Awards:

Congratulations to the Following **Living our Values Award** winners:

Janna Beard: *Invest in a Healthier Community*. Improving food safety at special events, Janna led the effort to streamline processes for vendors and address system gaps through better communication materials and educational outreach. Janna worked closely with colleagues to implement changes and arrange for inspections of special food events, festivals, and city celebrations.

Pam Blixt: *Exercise Leadership in Public Health*. As one of the most senior emergency preparedness planners and responders in the City, Pam has been instrumental in working across departments and organizations in Minnesota to shape the city's Emergency Operations Plans and response capacity with a particular focus on vulnerable populations.

Lisa Smestad: *Quality Inspires Our Work*. Deeply committed to protecting children and adults from home-based health hazards, Lisa has been successfully writing, winning and managing multi-million dollar United States Department of Housing and Urban Development grants for 12 years and has obtained more than \$17 million for the City.

The Adolescent Health and Youth Development Division Racial Equity Training Champion Team of Ashley Bremmels, Marie Capra, Mindy Fine, Atasha Hayden, Molly O'Brien, Carrie Peoples, Juanita Ramey, Olivia Walker and Chiung Wang: *Quality Inspires Our Work*. The team has worked hard to continually improve the Health Department's racial equity staff training by relationship building and better understanding the talents, experiences and values each staff person brings to improving intercultural competency.

Outstanding School Nurse:

School Based Clinic nurse **Melinda Fine** received *Mpls.St.Paul Magazine's* 2015 Award for Outstanding School Nurse, which is nominated by the metro's public and medical community.

New Employees:

The Healthy Living team welcomes **Martina Campbell** who will lead health care initiatives to improve the prevention and management of hypertension and diabetes. Martina has worked for the Tennessee Department of Health on heart disease and stroke prevention and women's health initiatives.

The Research and Evaluation Division welcomes **Vora Savengseuksa** who will be applying her experiences with underserved subpopulations in the U.S. and overseas to Minneapolis. Vora is multilingual (Lao, Thai, French) and hopes to practice Spanish and Somali to better connect with the city's diverse linguistic communities.

Departing Employees :

Best wishes to **Diane Haugesag** who left the Health Department after 7 years as an Office Support Specialist III to pursue a Master's Degree in Social Work.

With sincere gratitude for his years of service, we congratulate **Sebastian Cherayil** on his retirement. In his 31 years of service with the City, Sebastian has imparted to both new and veteran inspectors the public health significance of health inspections and food code violations.

After 15 years of service, Healthy Homes/Lead Hazard Control Unit Supervisor **Jennifer Tschida** is leaving the City for a position at Boston Scientific in the Regulatory Affairs unit where she will be responsible for getting FDA approval for medical devices in the cardiac unit.

New interns:

Over the summer, the School Based Clinic has had two STEP-UP Minneapolis Public Schools student interns, **Su'ad Aden** and **Molly Friesen**, who have provided great feedback on the teen clinics, entered student surveys, created outreach materials, and helped with social media, among other duties.